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Classroom

Executives are looking to spread their wings beyond the traditional MBA setting, and business schools are responding with a host of opportunities. From international trips to collaborations with major companies, here’s a sample of programs and courses. By Holly O’Dell

University of Arizona Eller College of Management // GLOBAL BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

Since forming its Executive MBA program in 2005, the Eller College of Management has offered this required module, which comprises 34 hours of intense classroom work followed by an 11-day international trip. “Almost all businesses are going to have some international trade component to them, and there are going to be unique challenges associated with managing those operations,” says Dan Bens, MBA associate dean and director of MBA programs at Eller. “We have a dedicated course that addresses these challenges within one class, rather than trying to sprinkle it into every single course in the curriculum.”

To prepare Executive MBA students for the trip, a finance professor and an executive with international business experience lecture on factors such as currency risk, logistical operations, ethical issues in different cultures, and consumer preferences outside the United States. “The students will have [background information on] prevalent issues, and then they can pick executives’ brains in a more sophisticated manner than if they were just going to a global destination without any training,” Bens says.

Eller Executive MBA students have traveled to China, Japan, Korea, and South Africa. Eller students will visit Brazil and Argentina next month.

UCLA Anderson School of Management // STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

Executive MBA students can take several routes to obtain business knowledge on a global scale, including the Strategic Management Research (SMR) program. The experiential learning program involves a six-month field study where teams of five or six students conduct intensive research on a company—often on an international level—and produce a strategic plan for the organization.

A recent project helped a venture-backed, high-tech company based in New Zealand and California that wanted a market entry strategy for Canada. For another project, students traveled to India, the Philippines, and South America for a group called Microcredit Summit Campaign, aimed at expanding...
In 2009, the percentage of programs requiring an international trip was 63 percent, up from 56 percent in 2005. China is the most popular destination, followed by India and Brazil.

Source: The Executive MBA Council

its model of helping the world's poorest women receive credit for self-employment.

"There's no substitute for actually going to a country ... and seeing the challenges and opportunities that exist for businesses in that region," says Gonzalo Freixes, associate dean of professional MBA programs at Anderson. "We are trying to bring the classroom to the world."

Georgetown University McDonough School of Business // GEORGETOWN-ESADE GLOBAL EXECUTIVE MBA

Paul Almeida, associate professor of strategy and international business, wanted to start a global program designed for executives who are looking for an MBA with an international business focus. Two years ago, Almeida and his colleagues launched the Georgetown-ESADE Global Executive MBA, a partnership between the ESADE Business School in Barcelona, Spain, the McDonough School of Business and Georgetown's Walsh School of Foreign Service. The intensive 14-month program includes six, 12-day modules around the world with assignments and exams in between.

At each location, students work with international peers and integrate their coursework with real-time business challenges, spending about 60 percent of their time in the classroom and 40 percent on the ground.

"Through this combined experience, students really get a sense for what it takes to work successfully in a different country," says Almeida, who runs the program with ESADE's Pedro Parada.

Locations include Washington, D.C., Barcelona, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Bangalore, Shanghai, Madrid and Moscow.
Auburn University College of Business // INTERNATIONAL RESIDENCY

Auburn students can experience international business at home and abroad. "In Alabama, we have automotive manufacturers from Korea and Germany and parts suppliers from all over the world," says Dan Gropper, a finance professor and associate dean of MBA programs. Kia and Hyundai recently opened large assembly plants within miles of campus. "Even in a small business, you need to have an awareness of global trends and developments."

Students have an international residency in the middle of the Executive MBA program, in tandem with a course on economics strategy. "While they're studying global competition and relationships between financial markets and economic policies, students can meet with government officials and businesspeople and see the linkages occurring firsthand," Gropper says.

The 10-day excursion is split between two countries. Past destinations have included China, Thailand, South Korea, Brazil, Chile, England, France, Germany and Poland. "We look for areas that we think are important right then," Gropper says. "This year we went to the Czech Republic and Ireland, at a time when the financial crisis was starting to rip through European markets."

Rice University Jones Graduate School of Business // GLOBAL HEALTH TECHNOLOGY COMMERCIALIZATION

Marc Epstein, distinguished research professor at the Jones School, developed a course where MBA students learn how to help alleviate poverty in developing countries. The participants form teams and try to use new technology—developed by Rice bioengineers—to solve a global health problem at a relatively low cost. The MBA students are then asked to make the product a business reality.

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"The course gives students a hands-on opportunity to look at business issues and dissect them on a local scale," says Julie Cisek Jones, assistant dean and director of the Kellogg School's Executive MBA programs. "Frequently, they will present their research and learning back to their management."

The 10-day trip puts executive students directly in touch with high-level corporate, government and professional leaders. The business meetings are tailored to individual projects that the students are researching on the trip, giving them an opportunity to meet with global management teams from their own company or within their industry. The internationally-themed class has another benefit: access to the Kellogg School's 52,000 global alumni. "They have made themselves available for interviews and outreach to the students," Cisek Jones says. "The alumni are a great asset from a cultural and networking perspective, and also from the standpoint of getting an insider's view of the real business issues facing each of these different geographies."

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Northwestern University Kellogg School of Management // GLOBAL INITIATIVES IN MANAGEMENT
Participants in this elective course get to choose which international destination they'll visit at the end of the quarter. Students have traveled to Brazil, Chile, China, Argentina, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Turkey, with plans for India in 2011.

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An undergraduate business program ranked #1 in academic quality (Bloomberg BusinessWeek). The top ranked part-time MBA program in North Carolina (US News & World Report).
A full-time MBA program ranked in the top 50 nationally (US News & World Report and Financial Times), and an MSA program with the highest first-time pass rates on the CPA exam for the past 5 consecutive years. The Wake Forest University Schools of Business are committed to providing students with the skills necessary to succeed in the world of business.

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After studying ways to commercialize health technologies in developing countries, business students take their product to Rwanda for 12 days. “I set up a meeting for them on the first day and tell them to find potential customers, suppliers, manufacturers and government officials,” Epstein says. “They have to figure out who the competition is, what people are willing to pay, how distribution would work, where they would get the materials, where they would manufacture and so on.”

“The prospect of experiencing firsthand what makes countries unique and similar, as well as working with executives of companies in those countries, created a very strong value proposition.” —Tina Cragg, graduate of the Georgetown-ESADE Global Executive MBA program

Will Pike and David Tipps were part of a team working with a technology called InfantiAIR, which assists a baby’s breathing. The students found easy access to top-level officials at hospitals. “They were all very receptive to hearing about the product but also challenged us with very specific questions,” Tipps says.

University of Michigan Ross School of Business // EXECUTIVE MULTIDISCIPLINARY ACTION PROJECT (ExecMAP)

For this course, companies offer a real-time project proposal that outlines goals, needs, anticipated outputs and travel expectations. This could include attending trade shows and symposiums, or visits to the company itself for data collection.

One prominent ExecMAP project involved Amcor Limited, a leading supplier of PET plastic containers. The manufacturer asked student teams to determine how to get a higher percentage of post-production recycled content into the next year’s products. The challenge? Americans weren’t recycling enough plastic to make it happen. The six-person ExecMAP team stepped in with actionable recommendations for creating a new recycling genre in the United States. “It was a very thought-provoking project that Amcor presented to its customers,” says Andrew Lawlor, an adjunct faculty member and director of ExecMAP. “These are not textbook-in-the-classroom experiences. Students develop tools that they carry with them long beyond the Executive MBA program.”

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Find Your Fit
Whether it's full time or part time, onsite or from a distance, there's a business education format to suit almost any need. By Jenny Sherman

Business schools have been operating in one form or another since 1881, when the first—the Wharton School, in Philadelphia—opened its doors. Since then, the number of business schools and programs has multiplied exponentially. Students can opt to take classes part time or full time; over the course of many years or a few days; on campus or through a distance learning format. How do you decide which format is right for you? Read on.

UNDERGRADUATE
What to expect: A number of four-year colleges and universities offer a bachelor's degree in business. These programs are all about building a good foundation of knowledge in a broad variety of courses. Students tend to be in their late teens and early 20s, and enrollment comes with all the trappings of a typical undergrad experience. These bachelor's degree programs focus on foundational business concepts—accounting, entrepreneurship, management, marketing, and finance are the most common. They also give students a framework in which to apply problem-solving models to business situations.

Benefits: A business-specific education can make you a highly attractive recruit when you enter the job market. You'll immerse yourself in the language and jargon used in business environments. Plus, an undergrad internship and mentorship experience provides suitable real-world experience.

FULL-TIME MBA
What to expect: One of the most respected business degrees is the Master of Business Administration (MBA). Students in these programs include an older and wider range of ages than the undergrad level. They're expected to dedicate time exclusively to their studies, so they often take time off from work. It typically takes two years—often split into four semesters with a summer internship— to finish a full-time MBA program, but options include condensed programs that span 18 months or even one year.

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EXECUTIVE MBA

What to expect: Developed for senior executives looking for enhanced careers or mid-level managers who want to step into a higher position, the Executive MBA (EMBA) is a program that can accommodate working professionals’ varied—and limited—schedules. Executives must keep working while earning their degrees, so classes typically meet on Fridays and/or Saturdays, usually one or two weekends a month over the course of two academic years. As a result, these programs are intense. Work and school...
can easily top 70 to 80 hours a week.

**Benefits:** Executive MBA programs are melting pots of experience, mixing high-level managers in one classroom. This can lead to great networking opportunities. As with the part-time MBA, you can use what you learn on the job right away. Earning this degree often translates to a promotion, so your employer often will cover your tuition.

### EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

**What to expect:** Executives who don't need a specialized MBA degree or already have one can enroll in a variety of non-degree executive education courses. These short-term classes can take place over a few days or several months. They often cover one specific topic or review broader, more general management strategies. Topics can be as general as global partnerships and nonprofit organization leadership, or as specific as earning a certification through a professional association.

**Benefits:** If you already have an MBA, you can refresh, update and expand your skill sets through executive education. It's also a great option for those who need training in a specific skill, rather than a broad conceptual education.

### DISTANCE LEARNING

**What to expect:** Distance learning offers the most flexibility. It often provides the same curriculum—and MBA degree—as an on-campus program. The difference? You can learn on your own time, in your own space and on your own terms. The format often employs the latest technology for teaching, including virtual classroom environments deployed online using webinar sessions, real-time chats, and collaborative project applications and software.

**Benefits:** If you have a busy schedule or cannot attend regular classes in person, you can enroll in distance learning programs. Distance learning requires good self-management and comfort with technological tools. Including a number of distance learners in one program can diversify classroom demographics and expose students to truly global and cross-cultural issues.

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**THE EXPERTS WEIGH IN**

What are the biggest trends in business education for the coming year? We asked five experts to share their thoughts.

By Jenny Sherman

**Kate Atchley**
Director, Executive MBA Program
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

The biggest trends are classes and concentrations in entrepreneurship, and courses related to sustainability and green business. Schools are increasing their entrepreneurship offerings and including project-based, business plan competitions. I believe we'll see more Executive MBA programs with not just one mandatory overseas trip, but with two or more international experiences. More universities will work with international partner universities to develop joint degrees that will provide students with the business, supply chain, leadership and cultural skills that are fundamental to success in the global marketplace.

**Beth Stoops**
Senior Vice President, Thunderbird
Corporate Learning / Thunderbird School of Global Management

Classroom-based programs are still in high demand, especially at mid- to senior levels within the organization. However, given financial and time constraints, organizations are requesting blended solutions or direct online learning. Education providers need to shift toward developing customized, integrated solutions that include a combination of alternative learning methodologies and modules that can extend over time. They also need to incorporate technology and social networks, enabling more collaborative and informal learning, which is the preferred manner in which Gen X'ers and Gen Y'ers learn.

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Bernadette Birt
Director of Executive MBA Programs,
North American Campus // Northwestern University—Kellogg School of Management
Despite the recession, it is worth noting that interest and participation in our Executive MBA program has remained strong. We see strong student interest in courses on innovation and leadership. Our courses emphasize these themes with a strong focus on collaborative work. There is a continued emphasis on looking beyond our borders and looking at what is happening as companies outsource more. There will be even more interest in exploring sustainability issues and green issues, both within the students’ firms and among their vendors and suppliers.

Dennis Sheehan
Associate Dean for MBA and Executive Education // Smeal College of Business,
Penn State University
One of the things firms are looking for is the ability to work effectively on cross-functional teams. The supply chain, marketing and finance people all have to collaborate to solve business problems that cross functional boundaries. This means that we need to give students more opportunities to work on business problems as opposed to functional-area problems. To hone these skills, students need theoretical frameworks to understand how to be better, and then they have to practice what they have learned in an environment where the cost of failure is low.

Steven S. Reinemund
Dean of the Schools of Business // Wake Forest University
The importance of ethics within the context of a business education has become increasingly relevant, given the headlines of the past few years. The result is a demand for leadership that can create solutions that assign equal weight to profitability and responsibility. I expect to see a commitment to greater balance between vocational competency and strong ethical leadership in the curriculum—and the vision of business education. A sound comprehension of technical knowledge is imperative, but a cornerstone of effective leadership is making tough decisions with both integrity and confidence. //

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Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business // aacsb.edu
The association is well known and respected among business schools. Find a list of accredited schools by name, country, state or region. The site features detailed profiles and direct links to official school websites.

Businessweek // businessweek.com/bschools/rankings
Businessweek ranks the top business schools in the United States, from undergraduate to MBAs. You'll find school profiles, admissions tips and a variety of articles on business education.

Executive MBA Council // emba.org
With a focus on Executive MBAs—flexible programs for working executives—this organization provides a directory of programs and information on education trends.

Review business school rankings in a variety of categories, such as best campus environment, best professors and most family friendly.

The Graduate Management Admission Council // gmac.com
An advocate and resource for quality graduate schools of business, the GMAC studies a variety of educational trends.

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